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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (10:03 a.m.)

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear  
4 argument first this morning in Case 10-209, Lafler v.  
5 Cooper.

6 Mr. Bursch.

7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JOHN J. BURSCH

8 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

9 MR. BURSCH: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,  
10 and may it please the Court:

11 There are three points that I would like to  
12 press this morning regarding deficient plea advice.  
13 First, this Court has consistently limited the effective  
14 assistance right to ensuring the reliability of the  
15 proceedings where a defendant is adjudicated guilty and  
16 sentenced. Mere outcome is not the Strickland prejudice  
17 standard.

18 Second, when asserting an ineffective  
19 assistance claim the defendant --

20 JUSTICE KAGAN: Could I -- can I stop you on  
21 the first? You say mere outcome is not enough,  
22 reliability of the proceedings. How does that fit with  
23 Kimmelman, where we said it, the right to effective  
24 assistance, does attach to suppression hearings,  
25 obviously where evidence would not make the proceedings

1 more reliable?

2 MR. BURSCH: Justice Kagan, even in  
3 Kimmelman the Court remanded back to the lower courts to  
4 determine whether there was prejudice, and the obvious  
5 implication was that if there was no prejudice on the  
6 fairness of the adjudicatory proceeding itself, there  
7 would be no Sixth Amendment violation.

8 The second point that I wanted to press this  
9 morning was that when asserting an ineffective  
10 assistance claim, a defendant must show deprivation of a  
11 substantive or procedural right, and this Court has  
12 already held that a defendant has no right to a plea  
13 bargain.

14 Third, every possible remedy for deficient  
15 plea advice creates intractable problems  
16 demonstrating the --

17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, isn't there a  
18 right to make a critical decision on whether to accept  
19 or reject a plea bargain, once offered? There is no  
20 right to demand one or to keep it, but isn't there a  
21 right to make that kind of critical decision?

22 MR. BURSCH: Justice Sotomayor, the -- the  
23 not guilty plea is an assertion of the defendant's  
24 constitutional rights. It's invoking the right to trial  
25 that the Sixth Amendment contemplates. And so this

1 situation is really more like Fretwell. It's not a  
2 decision that you have, for example, whether to have a  
3 jury or not to have a jury, or whether to have this  
4 attorney appointed for your counsel or not, because in  
5 each of those cases you have an underlying substantive  
6 or procedural constitutional right; and have you no  
7 right to a plea. And so this fork in the road is really  
8 an illusory one, because you have no right to choose the  
9 other side of the fork.

10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Suppose this were a death  
11 -- a death case, and roughly the -- the same facts,  
12 failure -- failure to communicate. And that leads me  
13 just to one other question that is based on your opening  
14 remarks. We can think about adjudication as having a  
15 constitutional violation, injury, and remedy. Are you  
16 saying that there was a violation in the abstract here  
17 but no injury, or was there a violation and an injury  
18 but just no remedy?

19 MR. BURSCH: I'm saying --

20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So if you could do all of  
21 that, including the death penalty. I --

22 MR. BURSCH: Yes, I'm saying that there is  
23 no violation, because in order to prove a Sixth  
24 Amendment violation you have to demonstrate  
25 unreliability of the adjudicatory process. I am also

1 saying that there is no reasonable remedy, and I will  
2 talk about that in a minute.

3 With respect to the death penalty in  
4 particular, I would refer this Court right back to the  
5 Fretwell decision, because there, too, defendant and his  
6 counsel had an opportunity to raise a Collins objection  
7 that would have changed the sentence to avoid the death  
8 penalty in that case. Collins obviously was before  
9 habeas process, and this Court held that the defendant  
10 could not use the vehicle of an ineffective assistance  
11 claim to regain that lost opportunity because he had no  
12 constitutional right in it. And so really the remedy --  
13 I'm sorry. The severity of the sentence doesn't enter  
14 the analysis once you have established that there has  
15 been no violation.

16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: When you say no  
17 violation, you don't mean that there was no ineffective  
18 assistance of counsel? I thought that was conceded,  
19 that there was ineffective assistance.

20 MR. BURSCH: That's correct, Justice  
21 Ginsburg. We have conceded for purposes of argument  
22 that there was ineffective assistance. But Strickland  
23 is a two-part test and, even after you get past the  
24 deficiency prong, there is still the question of whether  
25 this casts some doubt on the reliability of the

1 proceedings.

2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I thought that the  
3 second part of the test asked about harm. And here the  
4 person is sitting in prison for three times as long as  
5 he would have been sitting in prison had he had  
6 effective assistance of counsel at the plea bargaining  
7 stage. So why doesn't that just meet the requirements  
8 of Strickland, both deficiency and prejudice?

9 MR. BURSCH: Well, that's actually the best  
10 argument that the Respondent has in this case. And the  
11 reason --

12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Sounds like a good argument.

13 MR. BURSCH: Well, the reason why it's wrong  
14 is because this Court has been very careful to define  
15 what that harm is. Specifically, the word was "outcome"  
16 in Cronin and Strickland.

17 JUSTICE KAGAN: And outcome -- there is a  
18 different outcome here. He is sitting in prison three  
19 times as long. That's a different outcome.

20 MR. BURSCH: Yes, but the Court went on to  
21 define outcome to mean reliability of the adjudicatory  
22 process. Specifically, the language was whether absent  
23 the deficiency the defendant -- I'm sorry -- absent the  
24 deficiency, the factfinder would have had a reasonable  
25 doubt respecting guilt. And what we have here is a

1 situation where everyone acknowledges --

2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, take the sentencing  
3 cases. The sentencing cases, the determination of guilt  
4 is over and the question is, is this person sitting in  
5 jail for one day longer because his counsel was  
6 ineffective? And if he is we would find prejudice  
7 there. So why isn't the same thing true here?

8 MR. BURSCH: Well, I don't believe it's  
9 quite that simple. If there was some legal error, an  
10 error to which he had a constitutional right, then  
11 certainly what you said is exactly true. But if you are  
12 talking about more or less days because of, for example,  
13 a judge thinking that the difference between crack and  
14 cocaine sentences was not appropriate or other things  
15 that are really up to the discretion of the trial court  
16 judge, Strickland says absolutely those things are not  
17 Sixth Amendment violations.

18 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I guess I don't  
19 understand that answer, because that answer seems to  
20 suggest that the assistance being provided was not  
21 ineffective. But here, as Justice Ginsburg notes,  
22 you've conceded that the assistance is ineffective.  
23 That assistance has led to a much, much, much longer  
24 sentence. As opposed to some of the sentencing cases  
25 suggest that 24 hours is enough, this is 10 years or



1 something; and that should be the end of the game, no?

2 MR. BURSCH: Well, let's try another  
3 sentencing hypothetical, where it's clear that there was  
4 deficient performance. Say that there is a local trial  
5 court judge and everyone knows that he has a certain  
6 predilection that if you like the local sports team he  
7 is going to give you a break. If the attorney comes in  
8 and he does not press the argument that this convicted  
9 defendant likes the local sports team, he gets a higher  
10 sentence. That's still not a Sixth Amendment violation.

11 Really, once you shift sentencing, the  
12 question is were you legally entitled to the result.  
13 And simply because he failed to appeal to the right  
14 discretionary tendencies of the trial court doesn't  
15 really make a difference. Here we are talking,  
16 obviously, about the guilt phase and it's much easier  
17 here because it says clearly in Strickland and Cronin  
18 and Kimmelman and many, many other cases that that  
19 outcome difference, the harm difference, has to be  
20 reliability of the process itself. It's a process --

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: You acknowledge, though,  
22 that it's ineffective assistance of counsel if you're --  
23 well, no, I guess you haven't acknowledged. Let me ask  
24 you: Have you provided ineffective assistance of  
25 counsel if you are a lousy bargainer? You are just no

1 good at the -- you know; I don't know -- the game of  
2 bargaining. And so you do a bad job in bargaining down  
3 the sentence, I mean a notoriously bad job. Is that  
4 ineffective assistance of counsel?

5 MR. BURSCH: Under the Court's first prong  
6 of Strickland, you would have to look at whatever the  
7 standards of professional practice were and, depending  
8 how lousy the bargainer was, it could or could not be  
9 deficient. But the important thing is if it didn't have  
10 any effect on the subsequent trial and sentencing, then  
11 it would not be a Sixth Amendment violation.

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I don't even agree  
13 with the first part. I don't think our legal process  
14 is -- is a bargaining game. It shouldn't be.

15 MR. BURSCH: Well, we could agree with that.  
16 Bargaining is not what this is about, and that's why  
17 this Court has held in Weatherford and other cases that  
18 there is no right to the plea bargain itself. And  
19 that's really the second --

20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You can -- you can agree  
21 with that when 95 percent of the criminal cases are  
22 disposed of by way of bargaining?

23 MR. BURSCH: Because in the 95 percent of  
24 cases that are disposed of that way, this Court has  
25 already held in Padilla and Hill that there is a

1 constitutional right to have effective counsel when you  
2 accepting that plea. And the difference is when you are  
3 accepting a plea you're being convicted. That is the  
4 conviction. And this Court frequently establishes  
5 different tests when you are waiving a right, for  
6 example the right to go to trial, versus invoking a  
7 right, going to trial.

8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How can you talk about  
9 the reliability of a process or its fairness when you  
10 have an attorney who has fundamentally misgauged the  
11 law? How can a trial be fair when the attorney is going  
12 into a trial thinking his client can't be convicted  
13 because the shots fired hit below the waist? So how can  
14 that kind of trial ever be fair?

15 MR. BURSCH: Because there's no evidence  
16 here, not even a contention, that his belief had any  
17 impact whatsoever on the fairness of the trial  
18 proceeding. And this Court has drawn a bright-line rule  
19 at trial. If you look at the preliminary hearing, if  
20 there is attorney error there, deficiency --

21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, but you skipped over  
22 a step. I think we do assume that the deficient advice  
23 led to the determination to plead not guilty.

24 MR. BURSCH: Right again, but that fork in  
25 the road is not one to which he has a constitutional

1 right.

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, but that's the  
3 question -- that's the question we're confronting. So I  
4 think --

5 MR. BURSCH: Well, I --

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- your answer was a  
7 little too facile on that point. We have to assume  
8 there is ineffective assistance of counsel in advising  
9 the client the nature of the charge so that the client  
10 can make up his mind whether to plead guilty or not  
11 guilty. We have to assume that in this case, correct?

12 MR. BURSCH: Correct, we are assuming that.  
13 But what I would submit respectfully is that the plea  
14 stage isn't any different than a preliminary hearing or  
15 a line-up or a suppression hearing, where if there was  
16 some deficient attorney conduct this Court would still  
17 then look to see whether it had an adverse impact on the  
18 adjudication of guilt.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Suppose the defective  
20 advice causes the defendant to enter a plea that he  
21 would not have entered if he had been properly advised.  
22 Can he get relief?

23 MR. BURSCH: Absolutely. Under Hill and  
24 Padilla, this Court has said when you give up your right  
25 to trial that's a very different situation and that

1     there is a remedy for that.

2                   JUSTICE GINSBURG:   So explain why defective  
3     advice causing a plea, that qualifies, but defective  
4     advice causing defendant to turn down a plea --

5                   MR. BURSCH:   It's just --

6                   JUSTICE GINSBURG:   -- does not?

7                   MR. BURSCH:   It's just like the difference  
8     between deciding to proceed with counsel, in which case  
9     there is no barrier to entry, or deciding to proceed  
10    without counsel, giving up the constitutional --

11                  JUSTICE SCALIA:   No, the difference --  
12    that's not the difference at all.  It seems to me the  
13    difference is when you plead guilty you deprive yourself  
14    of the 24-karat test of fairness, which is trial by jury  
15    before nine people who have to find you guilty beyond a  
16    reasonable doubt.  When you plead guilty, you give up  
17    that.

18                  When you don't plead guilty you get what is  
19    the best thing in our legal system.  You can't do any  
20    better than that.

21                  MR. BURSCH:   Justice Scalia, you said it  
22    much more artfully, but that's exactly the point I was  
23    trying to make with Justice Ginsburg, that when you  
24    invoke your constitutional rights, your right to have an  
25    attorney, to go to a trial, to have a jury, we don't set

1 up barriers to entry. It's only when you give up those  
2 rights.

3 JUSTICE KAGAN: I take it, then, Mr. Bursch,  
4 you would have the same answer if the State had never  
5 provided counsel at all. So long as -- if the plea  
6 negotiations were all done between the prosecutor and  
7 the individual defendant, and the State refused to  
8 provide the individual defendant with counsel, but so  
9 long as the person in the end decided, oh, I don't like  
10 this plea, I'll go to trial, then it's all fine and  
11 dandy under the Sixth Amendment?

12 MR. BURSCH: That would be our position,  
13 because that's consistent with this Court's holding in  
14 Coleman and Wade and Kimmelman.

15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that would also be  
16 your position in a capital case?

17 MR. BURSCH: Yes. Under Fretwell this Court  
18 held definitively that so long as the reliability of the  
19 adjudicatory process and sentence were intact, that the  
20 deficient advice didn't affect it, that the severity of  
21 the punishment was not legally relevant.

22 JUSTICE SCALIA: So your position is you are  
23 entitled to effective assistance of counsel before you  
24 plead guilty, but you are not entitled to effective  
25 assistance of counsel in evaluating plea offers?

1                   MR. BURSCH: I would say it slightly  
2 different --

3                   JUSTICE SCALIA: All right.

4                   MR. BURSCH: -- that you are entitled to  
5 effective counsel at every critical stage; however, it  
6 is not a Sixth Amendment violation unless it casts doubt  
7 on the reliability of the adjudication of guilt.

8                   JUSTICE KENNEDY: That gets back to my  
9 question: Is it a violation in the abstract, *damnum*  
10 *absque injuria*?

11                  MR. BURSCH: I'm sorry.

12                  JUSTICE KENNEDY: Damage without injury.

13                  MR. BURSCH: No, because under the  
14 Strickland and Cronin cases there is no damage, there's  
15 no Sixth Amendment violation, unless you can prove the  
16 prejudice.

17                  JUSTICE ALITO: I mean, all of this is  
18 theoretically interesting and it may be that capital  
19 cases are *sui generis* here. But I thought the heart of  
20 your argument was that there just is no way to  
21 unscramble the eggs in this situation; there is no --  
22 and that was your third point, I understood it --

23                  MR. BURSCH: Correct.

24                  JUSTICE ALITO: --there is no remedy that  
25 can put the parties back into the position where they

1 would have been had the error regarding the legal issue  
2 not occurred.

3 MR. BURSCH: That's exactly right. And  
4 let's talk about the two remedies that are most  
5 frequently bandied about in the circuit courts. First  
6 is to order a new trial. And to us it makes no sense to  
7 order a second trial after you have already had a first  
8 error-free trial.

9 In addition, you think about these habeas  
10 cases; if you are issuing a habeas writ and vacating a  
11 sentence 8 or 9 years after the fact, like you are here,  
12 essentially you are releasing the, defendant, because  
13 witnesses will die, they will move away, memories will  
14 be sparse, and so that's the natural effect of that.  
15 And in Cooper's brief, he doesn't even advocate for a  
16 second trial; he asks for specific performance. The  
17 problem with that is there you are infringing on the  
18 prosecutor's discretion, which is sacred, to say what  
19 his plea offer is going to be. And circumstances have  
20 changed once a trial has taken place.

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: "Sacred" is a little  
22 strong, don't you think? I mean, it is a, to some  
23 extent, unfair to the prosecutor because he knows  
24 already he's got a guilty verdict in his pocket and he  
25 has to go back. But why is it so terribly difficult to



1 tell the defendant he has a right to accept that offer  
2 if he wants, but then go through the normal process,  
3 which is it has to be approved by a judge and all that  
4 stuff? I don't see what's terribly difficult about  
5 that.

6 MR. BURSCH: We contend it violates the  
7 separation of powers. But you bring up an important  
8 point because circumstances have changed in two  
9 respects. The first is that you learn more information.  
10 So here, for example, the prosecutor learned that not  
11 only did Mr. Cooper shoot Kali Mundy, but he did it  
12 while she was screaming and running away from him.  
13 That's a changed circumstance. He might not give the  
14 same plea.

15 Even more so in Frye, where they learned  
16 that he was picked for another criminal violation after  
17 the plea was given, and the prosecutor testified that he  
18 would have taken the plea back when he knew that.

19 But the bigger changed circumstance is the  
20 trial itself, because the prosecutor has now gone  
21 through the risk of having an acquittal. He has also  
22 put, for example, the 8-year-old sexual abuse defendant  
23 on the stand, something he tried to avoid with the plea  
24 offer. And it truly is an egg that cannot be  
25 unscrambled.

1                   And unless there are further questions, I  
2 will reserve of the balance of my time.

3                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.  
4                   Mr. Jay.

5                   ORAL ARGUMENT OF WILLIAM M. JAY  
6                   ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS  
7                   CURIAE, SUPPORTING THE PETITIONER

8                   MR. JAY: Mr. Chief Justice and may it  
9 please the Court:

10                  Petitioner's convictions and sentence are  
11 reliable because the proceedings that produced them were  
12 reliable. And to collaterally attack his convictions or  
13 his sentence based on allegedly ineffective assistance  
14 of counsel, he has to show that the ineffective  
15 assistance of counsel prejudiced him. As this Court's  
16 Strickland cases have used that term, that means he has  
17 to show that a reviewing court should lack confidence in  
18 the proceeding that produced the convictions or the  
19 sentence.

20                  JUSTICE BREYER: Well, you -- first, there  
21 is nothing about this in the Sixth Amendment, is there?  
22 I mean, the text of the Sixth Amendment talks about  
23 criminal prosecutions requiring the assistance of  
24 counsel for defense, period.

25                  MR. JAY: The Sixth Amendment requires the

1 assistance --

2 JUSTICE BREYER: There is nothing in the  
3 Sixth Amendment that has these qualifications. I  
4 haven't seen anything in any case which was other than  
5 case specific. That is, this issue hasn't been decided  
6 before, not to my knowledge. The language can be taken  
7 out of those cases, as you have very properly done. And  
8 so there is nothing that I could find in the cases.  
9 There is nothing in the Sixth Amendment itself. In 95  
10 percent of the cases, they do plead guilty. And what's  
11 the problem about ordering the prosecution to simply  
12 repeat the offer he gave before?

13 Well, I mean, I don't really see if there --  
14 And prejudice? Well, if a person's been executed, if he  
15 had gotten the -- if he had gotten the plea offer, he  
16 would have pled guilty for 50 years in jail, okay?  
17 That's my imaginary case. I can think of one where  
18 there's prejudice. He's dead. All right. So what's  
19 the answer in my imaginary case, if it's not in the  
20 amendment, not a holding, etc.?

21 MR. JAY: Well, I think that -- Let me  
22 address that capital hypothetical that has come up  
23 several times. And I think that it's instructive,  
24 Justice Breyer, to look at this Court's Strickland cases  
25 and look at what remedy they order when there has been

1 ineffective assistance that shakes the reviewing court's  
2 confidence in the proceeding that produced it. They  
3 order a new proceeding. They don't order a specific  
4 sentence. That's why the outcome has never been the  
5 yardstick by which ineffective assistance --

6 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't want to --I want to  
7 stop you there because I don't understand it. The  
8 suggestion is -- I'm not taking this case, I'm making up  
9 a hypothetical since we are discussing it really based  
10 on the next case. The defendant never heard the offer,  
11 never heard it. It is crystal clear that if he'd heard  
12 it, he would have accepted it. Okay. I'm trying to  
13 separate out difficulties of this case, which strikes me  
14 as difficult because of the facts, from the principle.  
15 And what I want you to do is to tell me why I shouldn't  
16 accept the principle, and then we can worry about what's  
17 a clear case.

18 MR. JAY: But I think the principle,  
19 Justice Breyer, is that you look at what -- you look at  
20 what it is the Court's being asked to set aside.

21 JUSTICE BREYER: Death. Let's say death.

22 MR. JAY: Right. So in this case you look  
23 at the death sentence. How was that death sentence  
24 produced? If the defendant can show, for example, that  
25 he got bad advice about the plea --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: He shows that never did he  
2 ever become aware, because his lawyer was sleeping and  
3 moved on vacation and never told him about the plea  
4 offer. That's my hypothetical.

5 MR. JAY: I think that's actually an easier  
6 hypothetical than the bad advice because you could show  
7 that if the lawyer then gets -- stands up and does a  
8 bang-up job at trial -- the defendant is convicted of  
9 capital murder, the defendant can't show any prejudicial  
10 effect on the trial -- that means that no other lawyer  
11 doing a better job could have gotten the defendant --  
12 could even show a reasonable probability that a  
13 different verdict would ensue. That defendant has a  
14 reliable capital murder conviction.

15 JUSTICE ALITO: The Court has said that  
16 death is different. Do you think it is inconceivable  
17 that there could be a different rule for capital cases,  
18 such as a rule requiring that in a capital case any  
19 offer of a noncapital sentence as part of the plea  
20 bargain can actually be waived by the defendant in court  
21 so that this doesn't come up? This is not a capital  
22 case.

23 MR. JAY: This is not a capital case, and I  
24 think that it certainly --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: All right, if you don't

1 want to do the capital case, I'm still trying to get to  
2 the principle.

3 MR. JAY: I'm happy to do the capital  
4 case --

5 JUSTICE BREYER: I will change my  
6 hypothetical and say all that happened was that this  
7 perfect trial because of mandatory sentencing rules led  
8 him to prison for 50 years, as compared with a plea  
9 bargain that would have given him 2 years. Now, he is  
10 in prison for 48 years more, and I consider that that is  
11 at least harmful to him. So where the amendment doesn't  
12 speak of it, where the misbehavior of the lawyer is  
13 crystal clear, where it's 48 years more in prison, what  
14 is it that bars what seems to me obvious that an  
15 inadequate assistance of counsel, remedial through a  
16 specific decree saying reinstitute the offer, led to  
17 enormous unfairness and prejudice.

18 MR. JAY: Two points, Justice Breyer, and I  
19 want to make sure I get out my answer to your capital  
20 hypothetical, because you don't look just at whether the  
21 sentence that resulted was worse than the sentence that  
22 could have resulted. If that were the case, Fretwell  
23 would have come out the other way. That is death, with  
24 no objection made, life sentence if the objection had  
25 been made. So it's not an outcome -- it's not a narrow

1 comparison of outcomes. What you look at is how the  
2 sentence was produced. Is this defendant entitled, had  
3 this -- to a lesser sentence?

4 Is this -- had this defendant had a better  
5 lawyer at sentencing, is there even a reasonable  
6 probability that that lawyer, through a different  
7 strategy for identifying a legal error --

8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Jay, you disagree with  
9 the assertion that Justice Breyer made that this was  
10 unfair. This man deserved to get the sentence he got,  
11 didn't he? He had a full and fair trial. A jury of 12  
12 people, finding him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt,  
13 determined that he deserved that sentence. How could it  
14 be unfair to give him the sentence that he deserved?

15 MR. BURSCH: Yes, that's correct. In every  
16 case --

17 JUSTICE BREYER: Let's say there is an  
18 occasion where people don't get the sentence that they  
19 deserve because, for example, the lawyer was inadequate.  
20 I mean --

21 MR. JAY: And in those cases, Justice  
22 Breyer, you show that the lawyer had a bad strategy at  
23 sentencing. That may well have been the same bad  
24 strategy that led the lawyer to recommend a not guilty  
25 plea. Let's go to trial on my crazy strategy. If he

1 can show that and he can show that a better lawyer with  
2 a better strategy would produce a different result, then  
3 the Sixth Amendment entitles that person to a new  
4 proceeding. The Sixth Amendment never entitles a person  
5 to have a court order a particular sentence.

6 And you can't use the prosecutor's offer  
7 made at a different time as the benchmark and say: Well  
8 the prosecutor was okay with it at this other time;  
9 therefore, the prosecution must be forced to live with  
10 it now. And that's because a plea offer rests on a  
11 number of considerations: The need to obtain the  
12 defendant's cooperation in other cases; the desire to  
13 spare the witnesses and the victim the burdens of trial;  
14 and frankly, to avoid the risk of an acquittal. And the  
15 prosecution in this case and in cases like this one,  
16 where there has been a reliable conviction and reliable  
17 sentencing, the prosecution has already incurred all of  
18 those burdens. So to look at the 51-month minimum offer  
19 that was made 8 years ago and have that be the benchmark  
20 simply is not something that this Court has ever done in  
21 its Strickland cases. And I think it's revealing about  
22 the Respondent's --

23 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Jay, you don't contest  
24 that plea bargaining is a critical phase, entitling  
25 somebody to a lawyer and to an effective lawyer, do you.



1                   MR. BURSCH: We don't -- we don't think --  
2   that's not part of our argument here.

3                   JUSTICE KAGAN: Yes, because we have said  
4   that many times, isn't that right?

5                   MR. BURSCH: Well, the Court -- let me be  
6   precise, Justice Kagan, because there are two things  
7   that the Court can be talking about. There's the --  
8   there's the interaction between the State and the  
9   defendant, and that's where the Court has customarily  
10  used language like "critical stage," a confrontation  
11  between the defendant and the prosecution.

12                  That's not what we have here. This is about  
13  private advice between the lawyer and the client, and  
14  we're not contesting --

15                  JUSTICE KAGAN: What we have to recognize --  
16  is that plea bargaining is a critical phase because  
17  about 98 percent of the action of the criminal justice  
18  system occurs in plea bargaining. And to deprive  
19  somebody of a lawyer at that stage of the process, where  
20  98 percent of the action occurs, is inconsistent with  
21  the Sixth Amendment. That's what we've said. Isn't  
22  that right?

23                  MR. BURSCH: Well, I don't think the Court  
24  has faced up -- faced this particular situation, Justice  
25  Kagan.

1 JUSTICE KAGAN: So it's not a critical  
2 phase. It's only a critical phase depending on the  
3 outcome of what happens at that phase?

4 MR. JAY: We are -- we are assuming that --  
5 that Mr. Cooper in this case had a right to receive  
6 effective advice about whether to enter this plea. But  
7 our position is that he wasn't prejudiced because  
8 what --

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Has -- have you ever seen a  
10 critical phase before in our Sixth Amendment  
11 jurisprudence where the right to a lawyer depends upon  
12 what happens during that critical phase, where if one  
13 outcome results there is no Sixth Amendment right, but  
14 if another outcome results there is?

15 MR. JAY: Well, again, we don't think this  
16 is in any way crucial to deciding this case, but  
17 Scott v. Illinois, Justice Kagan, is an example of that.

18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Jay, couldn't --  
19 couldn't it be said that what our cases hold is that  
20 pleading guilty is a critical phase. Would that be  
21 enough to explain our cases?

22 MR. JAY: It certainly is correct that  
23 pleading -- a guilty plea hearing, where the  
24 defendant --

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, it's correct, but is

1   it enough? Do you want us to write an opinion that plea  
2   negotiations are not a critical stage of the criminal  
3   process unless at the end of the day a guilty plea  
4   results?

5                   MR. JAY: That's not at all what we are  
6   asking, Justice Kennedy. What we are asking --

7                   JUSTICE KENNEDY: So Justice Kagan and I  
8   want to know what your test is.

9                   MR. JAY: Our test to resolve this case is  
10   to look at what it is that the habeas petitioner is  
11   challenging. He's challenging the conviction and the  
12   sentence. In the conviction, he was found guilty by a  
13   jury. He now says, page 14a of the red brief, that he  
14   is guilty and he wishes he had pleaded guilty sooner.

15                   No basis for challenging the conviction.

16                   May I finish the thought on the sentence?

17                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sure.

18                   MR. JAY: And -- on this sentence, he was  
19   sentenced in accordance with law. He had effective  
20   representation at sentencing and he got the sentence  
21   that corresponds to the counts of conviction. What he  
22   wants is to reinstate a deal that was in the  
23   prosecution's discretion to offer once upon a time.

24                   Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.

25                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

1 Ms. Newman.

2 ORAL ARGUMENT OF VALERIE R. NEWMAN

3 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT

4 MS. NEWMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,  
5 and may it please the Court:

6 It is uncontroverted here that Anthony  
7 Cooper received incompetent advice from his counsel. It  
8 is uncontroverted here that as a result of that  
9 incompetent advice Mr. Cooper is serving between 100 and  
10 134 months of extra time of imprisonment.

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I think it's not -- that  
12 he got ineffective assistance, yes, that is not  
13 controverted. But that he would have gotten the 51  
14 months or 68 is certainly controverted because of two  
15 interventions: The prosecutor can say no deal; I'm  
16 withdrawing it, even after an initial acceptance; and  
17 the judge can say, I think 51 to 68 is entirely improper  
18 for what this man did.

19 MS. NEWMAN: Those are both true, Justice  
20 Ginsburg -- - Justice Ginsburg, but however the  
21 Strickland test requires a reasonable probability of a  
22 different result. And on this record, we have no  
23 reasonable probability -- we have no reason to expect  
24 that that's not exactly what would have happened.

25 JUSTICE ALITO: The relief that you want is

1 specific performance on the plea bargain.

2 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

3 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't that correct?

4 What if it had come to light, come to the  
5 prosecutor's attention during this intervening time,  
6 that your client had committed four or five other  
7 shootings? Would you still be entitled to specific  
8 performance?

9 MS. NEWMAN: Yes. We evaluate the case, and  
10 the Strickland analysis is an imperfect -- the  
11 Strickland remedy is an imperfect remedy. It has always  
12 been an imperfect remedy. It will always be an  
13 imperfect remedy.

14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What -- what is the judge  
15 supposed to do? Let's say the remedy is it goes back  
16 before the judge. We are trying to unwind the clock or  
17 whatever the metaphor is. Does the judge have to  
18 prescind all knowledge of what he learned in the trial?

19 MS. NEWMAN: Well, this Court has stated  
20 numerous times that it presumes a conscientious  
21 decisionmaker, and a conscientious decisionmaker would  
22 put --

23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I'm asking what --  
24 I'm a conscientious decisionmaker and I'm asking for  
25 your advice on what I should do. I know the details of

1 this crime, which were more horrific than I would have  
2 expected because I've heard them at the trial. Do I  
3 just somehow forget about that -- prescind that?

4 MS. NEWMAN: You would evaluate the case as  
5 you would have evaluated it at the time of the  
6 proceedings.

7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The answer is "yes." I --  
8 I ignore everything that I learned during the trial?

9 MS. NEWMAN: Yes, because the deficient --  
10 you evaluate things at the point of the deficient  
11 performance. And at the point of the deficient  
12 performance, the judge had a certain amount of  
13 information before him, the prosecutor had a certain  
14 amount of information before him, and the defense  
15 attorney had a certain amount of information --

16 JUSTICE ALITO: I mean, that's pretty  
17 incredible. It doesn't matter what the defendant has  
18 done in the -- has been discovered to have done in the  
19 interim. Committed five murders, ten murders?

20 MS. NEWMAN: Well, in that case --

21 JUSTICE ALITO: Wipe it out of your mind;  
22 you get -- you get the plea bargain that was offered at  
23 an early point in -- in the investigation of the case?

24 MS. NEWMAN: Yes, because what happens in  
25 ineffective assistance of counsel claims is the State

1 has to bear the burden of the unconstitutionality. And  
2 so that is a price that this Court has said the State  
3 will bear when there is -- when there is a  
4 constitutional violation, because there is no perfect --

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The judge -- the judge,  
6 he knows what the plea -- let's say he knows what the  
7 plea bargain was, but he also knows that for one of the  
8 crimes, felon in possession, that alone, the sentencing  
9 range is 81 to 135. So without any, considering  
10 anything that happened at trial, the judge knows that  
11 the plea bargain was for less than if the man had been  
12 charged with -- only with a felon in possession.

13 MS. NEWMAN: Yes, that's accurate.

14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So it -- it seems most  
15 unlikely that a judge would have accepted the plea  
16 bargaining for 51 to 68 for the crimes that were  
17 charged.

18 MS. NEWMAN: No, I would disagree with that.  
19 In this court and I can represent to the Court in my  
20 practice before this court, which I have practiced  
21 before this court for many, many years, this plea  
22 bargain was an ordinary plea bargain. This was not  
23 anything extraordinary. It was very run of the mill.  
24 It was -- it was a run of the mill case --

25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That may be, but is it

1 not true that the sentence range was 81 through 135 for  
2 felon in possession?

3 MS. NEWMAN: I did not -- typically, you  
4 only score out the guidelines for the most serious  
5 offense. So the guidelines may have been high for the  
6 felon in possession offense, but however the judge -- in  
7 fashioning the remedy, you are not going to -- this  
8 Court would not take discretion away from the judge. So  
9 in fashioning the remedy, in adopting the remedy of the  
10 Sixth Circuit if this Court were to do that, this case  
11 would go back before this same judge if he's still on  
12 the bench, and it would be -- would put people back --  
13 Mr. Cooper would accept the plea, but if -- the judge  
14 retained sentencing discretion.

15 JUSTICE BREYER: It wouldn't be a problem.  
16 The problem with Justice Alito's hypothetical, I take  
17 it, is what the order would say is that the prosecution  
18 has to for a reasonable time extend the same offer. And  
19 then if it's accepted, you go to the judge. The judge  
20 doesn't have to accept the plea.

21 MS. NEWMAN: Right. You can't find --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: You can't make him do that.  
23 But I have a bigger problem with this case, which is --  
24 which I may be the only one to have. But as I've looked  
25 at it, I don't see ineffective assistance of counsel



1 within the AEDPA meaning. That is, you have two courts  
2 in the State which have said this is not ineffective,  
3 and as I look at it it's somewhat ambiguous at best --  
4 and we have the Sixth Circuit saying it is. Well, I  
5 know both sides agree, but I mean, both sides couldn't  
6 make us decide a case by saying there's a murder when in  
7 fact it's not.

8 I mean, so what am I supposed to do about  
9 that? I find this a tough case. I have read the  
10 record, and in my own opinion at this moment, perhaps no  
11 one else's, there is no ineffective assistance of  
12 counsel such that the Sixth Circuit could set that  
13 aside -- a contrary finding of the State court.

14 So what do I do?

15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: If Justice Breyer  
16 permits me to add an addendum to give the reasons why I  
17 might agree with him, or a way of viewing this, as I  
18 read the lower court's decisions, they said there wasn't  
19 ineffectiveness, because he was just trying to get a  
20 better deal.

21 And I think that, translating what he said,  
22 the very reasonable view by the court was, the  
23 prosecutor may think of a lesser charge, because if this  
24 guy really wanted to kill this woman he would have hit  
25 her head or her chest, but he aimed low, so he was

1 really just angry and shooting enough so that if he hit  
2 her, okay, if she died, okay. But he really didn't have  
3 that heinous intent to execute a gunshot to the brain.  
4 And so he was hoping to negotiate something better. If  
5 that's -- and Justice Breyer's shaking his head. If  
6 that in fact, if this is an AEDPA case, and we have to  
7 give deference to the State courts, doesn't that resolve  
8 this case?

9 MS. NEWMAN: No.

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: We have to  
11 give deference to their finding.

12 MS. NEWMAN: You do have to  
13 give deference to their finding, there is no question  
14 under AEDPA there is deference. And there is actually  
15 no question, there is sort of a doubly deferential  
16 review, given the Strickland analysis. However, the  
17 State courts did not decide this case on Sixth Amendment  
18 grounds, so there is nothing to give deference to. The  
19 State courts decided this and the trial court said Mr.  
20 Cooper made his own choices. That is not an ineffective  
21 assistance of counsel analysis.

22 The court of appeals in  
23 Michigan also did not engage in a Sixth Amendment  
24 analysis. They adopted the trial court and said that  
25 Mr. Cooper made his own choices. So there is -- and

1    this claim was raised specifically on Sixth Amendment  
2    grounds from the very beginning of the appeal until it  
3    reached this Court.  So there is no AEDPA deference to  
4    give to the State court's decision.  There is no  
5    question as well that it was ineffective assistance,  
6    because the State court record does not bear out that  
7    Mr. McClain was trying to get a better deal.

8                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:  You said earlier  
9    that the district court, the trial court judge, still  
10   retains discretion as to whether or not to approve the  
11   plea bargain, right, whether to accept it?

12                   MS. NEWMAN:  The sentencing.

13                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:  Yes -- well, which  
14   is it, the bargain or the sentence?  It includes the  
15   sentence, correct?

16                   MS. NEWMAN:  It's a sentence recommendation  
17   and under Michigan law the judge cannot --

18                   CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS:  He has discretion --  
19   he has discretion.  So is he allowed to take into  
20   consideration all that's happened before, not just with  
21   respect to guilt or innocence or the result of the  
22   trial, but in imposing the sentence or approving it?

23                   MS. NEWMAN:  Well, he can take into account  
24   anything that he could have taken into account in the  
25   first place.  But in this case --

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But nothing that he  
2 learned at trial, I take it.

3 MS. NEWMAN: I would argue no. I mean,  
4 certainly the court will set the parameters of --

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: What if he -- what if he  
6 turns it down, Ms. Newman. He says, no, I can't accept  
7 this. What happens then? He had a new --

8 MS. NEWMAN: I would say there is not an  
9 option -- oh, I'm sorry, so the judge --

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yeah, the judge. It goes  
11 back to the judge. We agree with you and we send it  
12 back to the judge. We reinstate the offer, okay. He  
13 accepts the offer and it goes to the judge and the judge  
14 says, no, this is outrageous. No, I'm not going to  
15 approve of this plea bargain. What happens then?

16 MS. NEWMAN: Well, in that case, the case  
17 would proceed under Michigan law. In that case the  
18 judge --

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: We would have a new trial,  
20 is that it?

21 MS. NEWMAN: No. I think -- I think it  
22 would be perfectly acceptable to say that a new trial is  
23 not an appropriate remedy in this case, because he had a  
24 trial.

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. So if the judge

1 turns it down, then the prior trial is valid, is that  
2 right?

3 MS. NEWMAN: It would depend on the reasons  
4 why the judge would turn it down. It would have to be a  
5 legitimate reason under a state law, otherwise there  
6 would --

7 JUSTICE SCALIA. Yeah. Then the prior trial  
8 is okay?

9 MS. NEWMAN: Not that it's okay, but I think  
10 under imperfect circumstances it's the result that we're  
11 --

12 JUSTICE BREYER: Why? Why? Why, why  
13 wouldn't the remedy be -- as -- judging from what you  
14 said before, is an order saying to the prosecution,  
15 re-institute the plea bargain and give him, a week or  
16 whatever it is. Now we imagine the defendant says I  
17 accept. So then they go to the judge, just as they  
18 would have before.

19 MS. NEWMAN: Right.

20 JUSTICE BREYER: And the judge has the  
21 freedom to accept that or to reject it.

22 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

23 JUSTICE BREYER: If he rejects it, there is  
24 no plea agreement. Now the defendant must plead. He  
25 can plead guilty or not guilty. And whatever flows from

1     that, flows from that.

2                   MS. NEWMAN:   That's also a perfectly  
3     acceptable -- that's also a perfectly acceptable remedy.  
4     The purpose -- the reason --

5                   JUSTICE SCALIA:   Wait.   Both can't be  
6     perfect.   Either he has another trial, although he's  
7     just been found guilty by a jury of 12, with an entirely  
8     fair proceeding or else he doesn't have a new trial.

9                   JUSTICE BREYER:   His suggestion is perfect  
10    but mine is more perfect.

11                   (Laughter. )

12                   MS. NEWMAN:   Okay.

13                   (Laughter. )

14                   JUSTICE BREYER:   You don't, you would --  
15    he's right, you would have to, under my suggestion, have  
16    a new trial; even though there was a trial that took  
17    place two years ago or whatever it is, correct?

18                   MS. NEWMAN:   Correct.

19                   JUSTICE BREYER:   But that isn't the end of  
20    the argument.

21                   So, if you are the defense counsel, the best  
22    thing for you to do is not communicate any plea offer  
23    you get, and then if your client is found guilty, then  
24    you can go back and say, oh by the way, I didn't tell  
25    you about this, and he gets a whole new trial.

1 MS. NEWMAN: No. The bar on habeas -- well  
2 the bar on Strickland, even not on habeas, is a very  
3 high bar, as this court said in Padilla. And it's not a  
4 bar that can often be met. And so you have to show  
5 under a Strickland analysis deficient performance and  
6 prejudice.

7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: A deficient  
8 performance --

9 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I don't know if that's  
10 going to be so hard to show. Do you think it's feasible  
11 to draw a distinction between this case, where there was  
12 arguably inaccurate legal advice, and the case in which  
13 the defense attorney simply makes a terribly mistaken  
14 calculation about the chances of a favorable verdict at  
15 trial? A favorable plea bargain is offered, caps the  
16 guy's possible sentence at let's say three years. The  
17 defense attorney says, we've got a great shot at an  
18 acquittal, let's go to trial. I'm going to rip the  
19 prosecution's witnesses apart. The trial turns out to  
20 be a disaster. Convicted on all counts. 25 years. Do  
21 you think that it's impossible for the rule that you  
22 want us to adopt here to be applied in that situation as  
23 well?

24 MS. NEWMAN: I think it would be much more  
25 difficult, because this Court on habeas review and state

1 courts on non-habeas review are very deferential to  
2 strategic decisions. Almost anything that qualifies --

3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, you say that. But,  
4 as an administrative matter, I think we have to have  
5 some concern that these plea negotiations and  
6 discussions are in myriad circumstances. The defense  
7 attorney is by the water cooler and the prosecutor  
8 walked by and says I'm thinking of offering you a good  
9 bargain in the Jones case. He knows he's going to have  
10 that prosecutor in court the next day and really beat  
11 him. He thinks he's going to soften him up, so he  
12 doesn't communicate it to the client and the prosecutor  
13 later says withdrawn. We are going to have inquiries  
14 post hoc on all these negotiations and discussions. And  
15 it seems to me that absent some other rule, like I don't  
16 think we have the authority to impose that all plea  
17 offers must be in writing and be stated with  
18 specificity, if that is what you are proposing, is  
19 simply unworkable.

20 MS. NEWMAN: I disagree, Your Honor. We  
21 have had Strickland that held jurisprudence for three  
22 decades. There was a flood gates argument when Hill was  
23 decided that we are going to have all these people --  
24 that we -- and we have had since McMahon v. Richardson,  
25 this Court saying plea bargaining is a critical stage.



1 JUSTICE KAGAN: And most of the circuits  
2 follow your rule, isn't that right?

3 MS. NEWMAN: Right. We already had  
4 unanimity --

5 JUSTICE KAGAN: And the flood gates have not  
6 opened.

7 MS. NEWMAN: I'm sorry.

8 JUSTICE KAGAN: Go ahead.

9 MS. NEWMAN: Yes, we have unanimity in the  
10 federal circuits and we have -- almost every state that  
11 has addressed this issue has addressed it in the same  
12 manner.

13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Unanimity on the remedy?  
14 Here the court said that the writ shall be granted  
15 conditioned on the state taking action to offer the 51  
16 to 85 months plea. So that doesn't bind the judge, but  
17 it does bind the prosecutor.

18 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And it removes the  
20 possibility of the prosecutor saying, "I would have  
21 withdrawn that initial offer. "

22 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So the prosecutor -- the  
24 remedy is -- is that the remedy that's uniform? That  
25 the prosecutor has no discretion, only the judge does?

1 MS. NEWMAN: Well, the remedies vary. When  
2 I said unanimity, I didn't mean every Court in every  
3 circuit does exact -- handles this exactly the same way.  
4 Unanimity in the sense that every federal circuit and  
5 almost every state that has addressed this issue, and  
6 they have addressed this issue for over 30 years, has  
7 found that there is a cognizable Sixth Amendment  
8 violation that can be remedied on appeal.

9 JUSTICE KAGAN: And perhaps the lack of  
10 unanimity on the remedy question is appropriate. I mean  
11 people have been trying to suggest different remedies.  
12 But perhaps one way to deal with the remedy question is  
13 to recognize that these cases present very different  
14 factual circumstances, that there is a lot of variation  
15 in them. And to give a substantial amount of discretion  
16 to the lower courts to work out what the best remedy is,  
17 consistent with that factual variation.

18 MS. NEWMAN: Absolutely. And it's the same  
19 thing the courts have been doing, again, since  
20 Strickland and Hill were decided.

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Like what. What factual  
22 variation do you think justifies a categorically  
23 different remedy. I mean, it seems to me some of the  
24 remedies are good and some are bad.

25 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: What factual -- I mean,  
2 give me an example of the different remedies and how a  
3 certain fact situation could make one okay and the other  
4 not okay.

5 MS. NEWMAN: Well, even in the two cases  
6 before the Court today. I mean, in Mr. Frye's case he  
7 accepted a plea and the state court ordered a new trial  
8 as a remedy for the ineffective assistance of counsel  
9 violation. In my case and Mr. Cooper's case --

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right. And why was that  
11 okay there? Why was that okay there? What factual  
12 circumstances made that okay there?

13 MS. NEWMAN: Well, that's just -- I don't  
14 know that the factual circumstances make it okay, but it  
15 was the remedy that the State -- I'm not sure I  
16 understand your question. It was a remedy that the  
17 State ordered and in this case it's just the remedy that  
18 was ordered by the Federal court was a remedy --

19 JUSTICE ALITO: -- a situation where the --  
20 where the defendant turns down -- where a plea is turned  
21 down and the defendant goes to trial, are there any  
22 facts in -- any facts that would make any remedy other  
23 than specific performance the correct remedy in that  
24 situation?

25 MS. NEWMAN: These cases are so

1 fact-specific, Your Honor, I don't want to evade the  
2 question about a hypothetical, but there -- every case  
3 is so fact-specific that I think there -- the  
4 possibility exists that a -- that --

5 JUSTICE ALITO: You're recommend -- you're  
6 recommending specific performance as the remedy for your  
7 case, and I agree with you that is, if there is to be a  
8 remedy, it's the only remedy that makes a -- any modicum  
9 of sense. The remedy of giving a new trial when the  
10 person has already had a fair trial makes zero sense.

11 MS. NEWMAN: That's correct.

12 JUSTICE ALITO: So what I'm looking for is  
13 any situation -- you said leave it to the discretion of  
14 the trial judge. But what is -- what discretion is  
15 there? What remedy in that situation other than  
16 specific performance would be an appropriate -- would  
17 remedy what you claim to have been the violation?

18 MS. NEWMAN: Well, in -- in Mr. Cooper's  
19 case I think the -- the remedy in the Sixth Circuit is  
20 the only appropriate remedy that -- that puts every --  
21 that is narrowly tailored to the Sixth Amendment  
22 violation, and that's what this Court has said.

23 I mean, this Court has given direction to  
24 the courts, to lower courts that you just narrowly  
25 tailor the remedy to fit the situation, because there is

1     so many factual --

2                   JUSTICE BREYER:   Well, let's go back because  
3     I'm now becoming convinced -- I am -- I am trying out  
4     what Justice Scalia suggested.   Maybe that does work  
5     better.   What -- what you'd say is first, throw the  
6     defendant out, unless you are convinced that not only is  
7     there ineffective assistance, but also it would have  
8     made a difference; he would have accepted the plea  
9     bargain.

10                  MS. NEWMAN:   Correct.

11                  JUSTICE BREYER:   So now they have to hold  
12     the plea bargain open.   They then do it.   They then go  
13     to the judge, like any plea bargain.   90 percent of the  
14     time the judge will say fine, and that's the end of it.

15                  MS. NEWMAN:   Correct.

16                  JUSTICE BREYER:   But should the judge decide  
17     that this is a case where he would reject the plea  
18     bargain, for any one of a variety of reasons, then our  
19     assumption was wrong and we reinstate the previous  
20     trial.

21                  Now does a judge just say it's over, you  
22     were tried, you were convicted, that's the end of it?  
23     What's wrong with that as a remedy?   I mean, what's --  
24     why is that -- why does that muck up the criminal  
25     justice system in some way?

1 I think that's pretty much what  
2 Justice Scalia suggested, and I -- and I am now trying  
3 that out, because the more I think about it, the more I  
4 think maybe that's okay.

5 MS. NEWMAN: Well, I -- I believe that is  
6 what is suggested. And I --

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Don't -- don't blame it on  
8 me.

9 (Laughter.)

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't -- I don't -- it's  
11 your suggestion that we set aside a perfectly fair  
12 conviction.

13 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, but I --

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: This is just a  
15 hypothetical. If you are going to set it aside --

16 MS. NEWMAN: Right.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- I think you should put  
18 it back in.

19 MS. NEWMAN: Well, again, right. It is  
20 going to depend on what happens -- happens below,  
21 and that -- we don't -- I mean, the -- the concept here  
22 is one --

23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You're -- you are  
24 begging the question.

25 MS. NEWMAN: Okay.

1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay? Because yes, I  
2 think Justice Breyer's first statement, you have to  
3 prove the guy was going to take the plea, because there  
4 is no sense in -- in giving him a remedy that he would  
5 have never sought.

6 MS. NEWMAN: Right. Absolutely.

7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right? But it goes  
8 back to, I think it was Justice Alito or Chief -- or the  
9 Chief Justice's question of on what basis can the judge  
10 reject the plea? You have said earlier that he has to  
11 put aside any information he learned during the trial,  
12 and that's really the nub of this case. What are the  
13 grounds that you are proposing the judge can use to  
14 reject the plea?

15 MS. NEWMAN: That -- any grounds that would  
16 have existed in the original circumstances. So if the  
17 judge -- in -- in Michigan there is a variety of reasons  
18 why a judge can say I -- I'm not going to accept this  
19 sentencing recommendation.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So how are you ever  
21 going to know that the defendant would have accepted the  
22 plea agreement? Because by not accepting it he has a  
23 chance of going scot-free. He's going to have a fair  
24 trial, that's the assumption; and he may be acquitted.

25 So how is a judge supposed to say -- I mean,

1 presumably the defendant will always say, I would have  
2 taken that deal, because it's better. So how is a judge  
3 supposed to go back and decide whether that's true or  
4 not?

5 MS. NEWMAN: Well, always -- in large part,  
6 it's not going to depend on the defendant, it's going to  
7 -- in larger part it's going to depend on -- depend on  
8 defense counsel --

9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why?

10 MS. NEWMAN: -- in making that  
11 determination, because Strickland always looks at  
12 strategy. I mean that -- that's the underlying --

13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I think you can answer the  
14 Chief Justice's question. The Chief Justice said how  
15 are you going to know -- you have to show prejudice.

16 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: And there is no prejudice  
18 unless he would have accepted the deal. How are you  
19 going to know that he would have? Of course he is going  
20 to say he that would have, but how is a trial judge  
21 going to make a credibility determination on that -- on  
22 that issue? I guess it's just a credibility  
23 determination. I don't know how he's going to do it. I  
24 think you can answer the Chief Justice's question yes or  
25 no.



1 MS. NEWMAN: Yes -- I don't think I can  
2 answer it yes or no.

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How is the judge --  
4 how is the judge ever going to know, be able to decide  
5 whether the defendant would have accepted the deal or  
6 not?

7 MS. NEWMAN: The same way that -- that trial  
8 courts decide any question of fact. In this case we had  
9 testimony from the trial attorney. The trial attorney  
10 told the judge, I told him not to accept the plea  
11 because he legally could not be convicted of the charge.  
12 I mean, Mr. Cooper --

13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It's the defendant's  
14 choice, not the lawyer's choice. It's the defendant's  
15 choice.

16 MS. NEWMAN: But he -- but he has the right  
17 to assistance -- to the effective assistance of counsel  
18 in making that critical choice, and he didn't have the  
19 effective assistance of counsel on -- Mr. Cooper wrote  
20 letters to the judge --

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's the  
22 effectiveness question. I understand that to be taken  
23 out of the case by the concessions on the other side.  
24 I'm talking about the prejudice question.

25 MS. NEWMAN: Correct.

1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How is a judge  
2 supposed to know?

3 MS. NEWMAN: The judge looks at the record  
4 before him. So in this case we had Mr. Cooper's  
5 testimony --

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: People have  
7 different -- some people are willing to take the chance.  
8 Okay? Let's say there is a 20 percent chance that  
9 the person will be found guilty.

10 Some people will say, I'm willing to take  
11 that chance because I just don't want the chance of --  
12 of going to jail. I am willing to roll the dice. Other  
13 people will say no, that's too much. Whether you want  
14 to go to jail may cut one way or the other, but how is a  
15 judge supposed to decide? Ask him, are you -- do you  
16 take chances?

17 MS. NEWMAN: No, by -- by looking at --  
18 Mr. Chief Justice, by looking at the evidence in the  
19 record before him. In this case Mr. Cooper wrote --

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So the judge should  
21 decide whether he would take the deal.

22 MS. NEWMAN: No --

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Look at the evidence  
24 before him and say, boy, I would take that deal.

25 (A little laughter.)

1 MS. NEWMAN: No, no -- no, no, no. Mr. --  
2 Mr. Cooper wrote two letters to the judge saying I want  
3 to accept a plea. Mr. McLean, the trial attorney who  
4 provided the incompetent advice, told the judge in a  
5 post-conviction hearing that Mr. Cooper wanted to take a  
6 plea. I mean, there -- there is no -- it is beyond  
7 question in this case.

8 JUSTICE ALITO: Do you think the length and  
9 the complexity of the trial has any bearing on this?  
10 This was a relatively short and simple trial. But let's  
11 say a prosecutor offers a plea deal in a case in which  
12 the trial is going to take 6 months and it's going to  
13 cost a million dollars and if they try that case, there  
14 are going to be other cases that they won't be able to  
15 try. The plea is rejected, the case is tried, and then  
16 afterwards the -- the remedy is to -- to -- to reinstate  
17 this plea offer, which was predicated on the relieving  
18 the prosecutor of the burden of having to try that case.

19 MS. NEWMAN: Well, every plea bargain is  
20 predicated on relieving the prosecution of having the  
21 burden of -- of trying a case. I mean, the key here is,  
22 let's get back to what Strickland stands for and it's  
23 the unreliability or the unfairness of the proceedings.  
24 It's not just an unreliability determination.

25 So in this case Mr. Cooper had two choices.

1 He could take a certain plea with almost a certain  
2 sentence or he could have a -- really what was a charade  
3 of a trial because his attorney told him, you -- you  
4 can't be convicted of this offense; you will not be  
5 convicted of this offense following the trial. You can  
6 be convicted of a lesser --

7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You conceded -- you  
8 conceded he had a fair trial. That's not in the case.

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Right.

10 MS. NEWMAN: I didn't --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It can't be a charade and  
12 still be fair.

13 MS. NEWMAN: It's an unfairness of the  
14 entire proceedings that were presented. All right? So  
15 there is no separate habeas claim with respect to the  
16 trial, but the -- but reality is when you look at the  
17 criminal -- when you look at the Sixth Amendment, it  
18 talks about the criminal --

19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You are saying it was  
20 unfair to have a fair trial?

21 MS. NEWMAN: I'm saying it's unfair to go to  
22 trial when your attorney tells you, you can't be  
23 convicted.

24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: You are saying it's unfair  
25 to have a fair trial; isn't that correct?

1 MS. NEWMAN: I'm --

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That has to be your  
3 position.

4 JUSTICE SCALIA: It is.

5 MS. NEWMAN: I'm saying it's unfair to say  
6 that the trial erases the unfairness when there was no  
7 possibility but for a conviction at the end of the road.  
8 So this was a certain guilty plea or this was a -- wrong  
9 guilty plea under the math of a trial.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, but you can  
11 never say that there is no possibility of acquittal.  
12 Juries can decide not to convict no matter what the  
13 evidence.

14 MS. NEWMAN: There was no defense. I mean,  
15 there was no possibility --

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: That's up to the  
17 jury. It's not up to us ex ante to decide this guy is  
18 definitely going to lose, so let's not waste our time.  
19 Juries -- I don't want to say often but it is not --  
20 it's certainly not inconceivable that the a may decide  
21 for whatever reason we are not going to convict this  
22 guy. Right?

23 MS. NEWMAN: That's true, but in this case,  
24 Mr. McLean told Mr. Cooper he would be convicted. I  
25 mean, he assured him of conviction. He said: You will

1 be convicted at the end of the trial; you're just going  
2 to be convicted of a lesser offense.

3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, what was the  
4 defense at trial?

5 MS. NEWMAN: I'm sorry?

6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: What was the defense at  
7 trial?

8 MS. NEWMAN: There wasn't -- there was no  
9 defense presented. There was no real defense presented  
10 at trial because --

11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Did he deny having  
12 committed the act of the shooting?

13 MS. NEWMAN: Never.

14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: At trial?

15 MS. NEWMAN: No.

16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is it the case that in  
17 most of the cases in which motions of this kind are  
18 brought to trial judges if there is a defense of  
19 mistaken identity or of "I didn't do it," that judges  
20 often find the defendant has not proven that they would  
21 have taken the plea?

22 MS. NEWMAN: I didn't --

23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: In most cases in which a  
24 trial is had, where the defendant is pleading  
25 misidentification or: I just didn't do this act. In

1 those cases, do most of the trial judges not permit or  
2 don't find that the defendant has met their burden of  
3 proving that he or she would have taken the plea?

4 MS. NEWMAN: I don't know that the cases  
5 bear out that if you have a valid defense it would be  
6 harder. But I would agree with that -- if that's a  
7 hypothetical, that if you have a valid defense, it would  
8 be a lot harder to be in this position of showing that  
9 you would have taken the plea.

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I thought of this case,  
11 and you can correct me if I am wrong, that your client  
12 told the attorney from the beginning: I did it; I want  
13 to plea.

14 MS. NEWMAN: That is correct. There was  
15 never -- There was no question in this case at any step,  
16 at any stage of the proceedings and there was no --  
17 never, never anything from the trial attorney other than  
18 incompetent advice. He never went to trial for an  
19 acquittal. He went to trial because he believed legally  
20 his client would be convicted of a lesser offense that  
21 would put him in a better position than if he had  
22 accepted the plea. That's the only reason.

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You said that -- I  
24 want to make sure I understood your point. You said  
25 there was no defense. Does that mean you didn't --he

1 had a frivolous defense or that he literally did not put  
2 on a defense, just said: Just this state has to prove  
3 the case and they haven't done it.

4 MS. NEWMAN: Well, he held the state to its  
5 burden, and that is a defense. I mean, I...

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Did he --

7 MS. NEWMAN: I'm not saying literally no  
8 defense, and I apologize if that's the what he it came  
9 across, but no cognizable defense. It was not mistaken  
10 identification or we didn't intend to hit her. I mean,  
11 he never contested the basic facts of that case.

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Something the jury  
13 could have accepted, right? Even if it's not legally  
14 true that if you shoot him at the -- the person below  
15 the waist, that's not a defense, but I can see a  
16 reasonable juror saying he probably didn't intend to  
17 kill her. He shot her below the waist. Maybe that is  
18 not such a bad strategy.

19 MS. NEWMAN: Except the defense counsel on  
20 this record specifically said that he -- that he was not  
21 running a strategy and hoping for that, that he told the  
22 client legally the only thing that could happen to him  
23 so he was in a better position by going to trial.

24 Thank you, Your Honor.

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.



1 Mr. Bursch, four minutes.

2 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF JOHN J. BURSCH

3 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

4 MR. BURSCH: Thank you. I would like to  
5 start at the one point where I think all of us,  
6 including counsel on both sides agree, and that's that a  
7 second trial after an error-free first trial doesn't  
8 make sense. And that right there says a lot about Mr.  
9 Cooper's case, because a Strickland remedy is typically  
10 a new trial. And it's exceedingly strange that they are  
11 now saying that: I don't want a new trial. That  
12 demonstrates that what they are claiming is not a  
13 Strickland violation.

14 I would like to address, Justice Breyer,  
15 your suggestion that maybe you could have specific  
16 performance of the plea; and if it's rejected, then the  
17 trial result could simply be re-imposed. And the  
18 question is: Well, what's the problem with that? And I  
19 can tick off at least five.

20 First, as Justice Ginsburg pointed, out it  
21 takes away the prosecutor's ability to withdraw the plea  
22 which he or she undeniably would have had the right.  
23 Second, as Justice Alito said, it ignores that there is  
24 information that could be learned in the interim. Mr.  
25 Cooper could have shot three or to four other people.

1 Third, it ignores the fact that an error-free trial has  
2 taken place. The prosecutor has taken the risk of  
3 putting that the 8-year-old sexual abuse victim on the  
4 stand, and you cannot take that risk away.

5 Fourth, as I already mentioned, we have the  
6 separation of powers issue and prosecutorial discretion.  
7 Fifth, we are going to have intractable problems. Say  
8 the offer was plead to A, we will dismiss B; he rejects  
9 it based on deficient advice; you go to trial; he is  
10 convicted on A and acquitted on B, and now we are going  
11 to try to enforce the plea on A? I mean, that's almost  
12 a double jeopardy problem. So there is intractable  
13 problems. The second point I want to make is about the  
14 death situation. And that's one we take very seriously.  
15 And, Justice Alito, it may be that in a death penalty  
16 situation there could be a due process right or some  
17 other constitutional right that may mitigate in favor of  
18 requiring something be put on the record. But what is  
19 clear is that under this Court's existing precedent,  
20 that is not a Strickland violation because the amount of  
21 the sentence, whether it's death or 50 years, has  
22 nothing to do with the reliability of the adjudicatory  
23 proceeding and the sentence. Finally, the last point  
24 that I want to make is something else on which we can  
25 all agree. Mr. Cooper is guilty of shooting Kali Mundy.

1 He also got exactly the sentence that the people  
2 prescribed for the crime that committed. There is very  
3 little unfair about holding him to that sentence. As  
4 Justice Kennedy said, "It's the position of Mr. Cooper  
5 that it is unfair to have a fair trial. " And from our  
6 perspective, that is really the beginning and the end of  
7 this inquiry. And unless you have any further  
8 questions --

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I have one -- It's more  
10 proper, I think, for the government of the United States  
11 under the Federal rules, Rule 11, there has to be a  
12 colloquy before a plea is entered. Do you think the  
13 Federal rules and perhaps state rules should be amended  
14 so that judges, trial judges before imposing a sentence  
15 inquire: Have there been plea offers; have they all  
16 been communicated to the defendant? Is that good  
17 practice?

18 MR. BURSCH: It could be good practice, but  
19 it wouldn't have solved the problem here, because even  
20 if they had put the fact of the plea on the record, the  
21 problem was the alleged deficient advice that the lawyer  
22 gave to the client in private. And so that doesn't  
23 solve the core problem. The core problem is that they  
24 are trying to claim that it was unfair to have a fair  
25 trial.

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, if they had -- if  
2 plea offer had come out -- I don't know how it would  
3 work. When you enter a not guilty plea, you enter a not  
4 guilty plea.

5 MR. BURSCH: Right. You know, the judge  
6 under your theory then would have had to inquire: Well,  
7 what advice did your attorney give you with respect to  
8 that? And then evaluate whether that advice was good  
9 advice or bad advice. And I respectfully submit that  
10 that would not be a good policy to adopt by rule.

11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.  
12 The case is submitted.

13 (Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the case in the  
14 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

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